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# Bidi Fact Sheet



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Resource Center  
State of California  
Alcohol and Drug Programs  
1700 K Street  
First Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

(800) 879-2772 (California Only)  
(916) 327-3728  
FAX: (916) 323-1270  
TDD: (916) 445-1942  
Internet: [www.adp.ca.gov](http://www.adp.ca.gov)  
[ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us](mailto:ResourceCenter@adp.state.ca.us)

## **What is a Bidi?**

Bidis (also known as beedis or beedies) are small brown cigarettes, often flavored (such as vanilla, chocolate, or strawberry), consisting of tobacco hand-rolled in tendu or temburni leaf and secured with a string at one end.

## **Where Do Bidis Come From?**

They are primarily produced in India, and in some Southeast Asian countries, and are imported into the United States. Bidis were once sold only in tobacco specialty shops and cigarette stores but now are showing up in gas stations and convenience marts. Currently, there are three major importers of bidis.

## **What Are the Effects of Bidis?**

The nicotine content in bidis is up to seven times greater than in cigarettes. A higher percentage of nicotine in bidis means a bigger head rush than cigarettes. Bidis are also more addictive because of the extra nicotine. In addition, one bidi produces more than three times the amount of carbon monoxide and more than five times the amount of tar than one cigarette. Bidi smokers have an increased risk of coronary heart disease and cancers of the mouth, pharynx and larynx, lung, esophagus, stomach and liver. Bidi use during pregnancy can cause perinatal mortality.

## **Are Bidis Legal?**

Even though bidis are legal in the United States, 7 out of 10 packages of bidis are missing the Surgeon General's warning

that smoking may cause cancer and be harmful to one's health. In addition, Arizona has banned the sale or distribution of bidis.

## **What Do Bidis Cost?**

It is less expensive to purchase a pack of 25 bidis than a pack containing 20 cigarettes.

## **Who Smokes Bidis?**

There are currently no national statistics on the prevalence of bidi use in the United States, but they appear to be gaining in popularity among young people. Teenagers smoke bidis mostly because they think it's cool or because bidis make them feel good. Bidis also seem to be popular in some low-income areas, such as the Tenderloin district in San Francisco. Bidis are big now in California but appear to be making their way east to St. Louis, Chicago, Cleveland and Boston.

## **What Can Parents Do?**

Keep in mind that while many teens are just carrying around bidis to look cool because they look like marijuana, there is a danger that young people will be trained in the culture of smoking. Bidis and similar products can also act as a gateway to other drug use.

For ideas on keeping kids away from tobacco products, see *Reducing Tobacco Use Among Youth: A Community Guide*, also available from the Resource Center.